3rd May 1868

(VC 37945)

My dear Tom

I enclose you half £5 note for dear Maria having sent the other half to her to your house by same post — as yet I cannot write you at length as I have much to do for the P.O. in the absence of Mr Odo Russell, but as every thing turns out well with me; so I dont feel or care for a little more trouble

I am much relieved & my rheumatism & can even play on my piano a little, how lucky you were not to have been affected in your hands, for this threatened to be my worst chance, but now I paint with comparative freedom tho not easy — my walk is still with Roman dignity, for I used to go

about like a flea or a lamplighter

I trust this will find you all well & that you & also dear Marie will give me a charming letter a piece

Maria wrote a fascinating account of you all & filled me with rejoicings & I beg to congratulate you & my dear sister Emma at the deserved success of your gifted daughter – How I should like to sit down in the old arm chair & hear all about them. But I fear that I may not ever again at least for the present attempt so rash a journey, indeed I feel fixed here for life & to well that every thing suits me even my various occupations, in haste

Your loving brother Joe

6th May 1868

Kept cool in water & also the wine, then I have an excellent cook a middle aged woman who strives to keep me up with good things & succeeds, for I have always a good appetite & sleep really well so that I have good hope of patching myself up — I look brilliant they all tell me but am not quite able to do all the duties of my Italian Consulate as I wish, but my two Sec^ty^s are so excellent & so indulgent & devoted to me that I get off enough even as regards my Consulate

At 9 I breakfast always with one egg at 3 I dine when I "shut shop" at 9 I take some little trifle & to bed before 10 — for a year I have never been out in the ev^g^ — my hands are recovering — & I played near half the Barber of Seville — but I cannot remain long in one position & always get up from the chair in pain — It seems that the priests have quite prevented me going to the Florence Palace to live as the Pope would be so offended — I wanted to go as I should have been rent free but the jealousy against me is enormous so I keep very quiet which I can afford having such an enviable position, so far beyond my poor merits & such as I could never even dream of to "husband out life's taper at the close" I dare say even you are astonished as much as I am

Your loving Joe